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## African-American Recreation at Two Corps of Engineers Projects: A Preliminary Assessment

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### Purpose

Research is being conducted at the U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station (WES) to examine ethnic groups' existing and future use of Corps of Engineers operating projects and to determine the recreation preferences and needs of these groups. This information will be used by decision-makers in project planning and operations.

This technical note presents the preliminary findings of research among African-Americans and discusses the implications regarding the Corps' working relations with its African-American customers.

### Background

During the 3-year period 1997-99, four ethnic minority groups are being studied: Native-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Hispanic-Americans. This research is in response to Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards," and Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations."

WES researchers conducted focus group meetings during 1997 with 15 Native American tribes in the Corps' Tulsa and Omaha Districts. Results of that research were summarized in *Natural Resources Technical Note REC-09* (Dunn and Feather 1998).

In spring 1998, extensive fieldwork was conducted at five Corps projects to study first-hand the outdoor recreational habits and preferences of African-, Hispanic-, and Asian-Americans. Activities included interviews with Corps project personnel and minority visitors, ethnographic observation of visitor recreational behavior, and a series of focus group meetings with ethnic minority visitors. The data obtained will be summarized in a series of *Natural Resources Technical Notes* on minority recreational behavior and will be used to prepare a



survey instrument that will be administered to ethnic minority visitors at the five projects lakes during 1999.

## **Previous Research on African-American Recreation**

African-Americans represent about 12 percent of the total population of the United States (Frey 1998). Of the 70 million persons expected to be added to the country's population between 1980 and 2025, nearly 25 million are projected to be Hispanic, 17 million will be black, and other minority racial and ethnic groups will increase by about 14 million (Gramann 1996). Stated another way, 78 percent of the growth of the U.S. population between 1980 and 2025 will result from increases in the country's minority population, and black Americans will be a major component of this growth. For this reason alone, it is critical for the Corps to understand how black Americans recreate and what the management implications are for the Corps' overall recreation program.

Gramann (1996) presents a detailed review of trends, policy, and research dealing with ethnicity and outdoor recreation. This extensive literature review was funded by the Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and represents the first product of the Corps' Recreation Research Program (RRP) work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation. While Gramann's review deals with all four of the minority groups being studied, this technical note discusses only his findings on African-American recreational behavior. Gramann (1996) identified three major recreation research themes: underparticipation and underutilization, outdoor recreation style, and acculturation and recreation. Each of these themes is addressed in the following sections.

### **African-American Underparticipation**

In the 1960s and 1970s, a major issue in recreation research concerned the "underparticipation" of minority groups in outdoor recreation, particularly in wilderness settings. Gramann (1996) notes that these early studies generally showed that a smaller proportion of African-Americans took part in many types of outdoor recreation than did whites. These studies indicated the consistent underutilization by African-Americans of some types of outdoor recreation areas, such as rural national parks and forests.

More recent research has attempted to determine clear ethnic/cultural differences in recreation participation. For example, Dwyer (1994) studied recreation participation by ethnic minorities in 24 different activities and found that African-Americans were significantly less likely than whites to participate in three categories of recreation behavior: rural and wildland activities (hiking, tent camping); activities involving water, ice, or snow (e.g., swimming, water-skiing, motor boating, sailing, canoeing, downhill skiing, ice skating, cross-country skiing); and activities that are expensive for participants (e.g., golf). He found that African-Americans were significantly more likely to take part in many outdoor team sports, such as outdoor basketball and softball.

In contrast to Dwyer's findings, Floyd and others (1994) reported that whites and blacks who perceived themselves as middle class differed significantly from each other only in their preference for sports activities (blacks ranked them higher). No differences were noted

between middle-class blacks and whites in their preferences for such outdoor activities as hunting or fishing, camping or hiking, and boating or skiing. The explanation for this lack of difference involves the current debate on "marginality versus ethnicity," which is addressed in a later section of this technical note.

In his review of an extensive and growing body of research on African-American recreation, Gramann (1996) wrote:

Generally speaking, a higher percentage of white Americans tend to participate in wildland recreation activities than do African-Americans. One frequent exception to this pattern is fishing and hunting. In some studies, blacks and whites have been found to participate at equal rates with whites in both of these activities, while in other research minority groups have participated at higher rates. One explanation for this pattern is that fishing is an outdoor activity that may be done for sustenance by some low-income minority groups. Another explanation for the popularity of fishing and hunting to blacks is that African-Americans have a long tradition of participating in these activities that dates back to the slavery period. A similar tradition of participation does not exist for many other contemporary recreation activities.

Other significant differences between blacks and whites (and other ethnic groups) in their recreation participation are reported by Gramann (1996) in the recreation literature in the following categories:

**Travel to and use of outdoor recreation areas.** African-Americans tend to stay closer to home than whites when engaging in outdoor recreation (Dwyer 1994, Dwyer and Hutchinson 1990, and Washburne and Wall 1980).

**Perceived discrimination and underutilization.** African-Americans still fear the potential for discrimination and bigotry in trips through "unknown" territory, e.g. rural America (Outley 1995, West 1993). African-Americans also expressed a reluctance to go to places where African-Americans did not constitute a majority of the visitors, because they felt they would not be safe from racial intimidation (Wallace and Witter 1992). Taylor (1989) showed that many African-Americans have either personally experienced racist attacks when they visited "white" beaches, playgrounds, pools, or parks or have been told of these experiences by others. As a result, many blacks are still reluctant to visit recreation areas where they feel that there is a chance they will not be welcome.

### **African-American Recreation Style**

Until quite recently there has been little substantive research dealing with African-Americans' recreation style. Most studies of style differences in outdoor recreation have compared Anglo-Americans with Hispanic Americans. The term "recreation style" has been defined as "the unique quality of recreation behavior that arises from variation between ethnic groups in group size, participation motives, spoken language, and attitudes toward natural resources, including facility-development preferences" (Gramann, Floyd, and Ewert 1992). Gramann (1996) notes that Federal agencies' concern with ethnic variation in recreation style frequently reflects the pragmatic concerns of resource managers that the behaviors of

some minority groups may result in inferior recreation experiences for nonminorities, vandalism of facilities, and degradation of natural resources.

Research on outdoor recreation style can be subdivided into four major categories. The synopsis that follows is based on Gramann (1996) and focuses solely on African-American recreational style.

**Size and composition of social groups.** Blacks resemble non-Hispanic whites in their tendency to participate in recreational activities either as individuals or as a member of single-generation peer groups.

**Participation motives.** There is little information in the published literature to suggest any difference from non-Hispanic whites' recreation motivation. Gramann, Floyd, and Saenz (1993) speculate that the pattern of greater importance attached to family-related recreation motives by Hispanic-Americans reflects a fundamental sociological function of recreation (and leisure in general) as a means of preserving core cultural values in an Anglo-dominated society. There are no data supporting such a pattern among African-Americans.

**Language.** Non-Hispanic blacks show no substantial difference in language use than whites. Gramann reports no recreation studies dealing with idiosyncratic black dialects (e.g., Ebonics, American Black English, etc.).

**Attitudes toward natural resources and facility development.** Numerous studies have been conducted showing that blacks and whites differ substantially in their perceptions of natural environments and in their interest in natural resource management and environmental issues. In general, blacks have shown less concern for environmental protection issues, and less preference for purely natural settings and nature-oriented recreation activities. Taylor (1989) has argued that one possible cause for the black-white difference is that, because many African Americans have limited economic means, they cannot afford to be concerned about protecting the natural environment. They are forced to place a higher priority on securing other basic socioeconomic needs. This explanation follows the marginality explanation of ethnic differences in outdoor recreation participation. Other explanations for blacks' lack of interest in natural resources refer to a historical desire to be free of the land (associated with share-cropping and slavery) and the fear of dangerous wildlife found in natural environments (expressed in black folklore) (Gramann 1996).

Regarding facility development, several studies have shown that a higher percentage of African-Americans preferred developed facilities and conveniences in recreation areas than whites. Whites were far more likely to prefer preserved natural/undeveloped areas. In a number of studies, African-Americans consistently favored more development in recreation areas than whites (Scott 1993, Washburne and Wall 1980). Gramann (1996) indicates that concerns over personal safety appear to significantly affect the facility and services preferences of many African-Americans. He describes one study where black focus group participants mentioned security and protection from random violence as critical features of desirable urban nature centers (Wallace and Witter 1992).

## **African-American Acculturation**

With regard to acculturation, most recreation research has focused on non-English-speaking groups (particularly Hispanics) and Asian-Americans. Gramann (1996) notes that these studies have been criticized in the literature for treating ethnic and racial groups as culturally homogeneous blocs. The assumption of cultural sameness within any ethnic minority group is far too simplistic. This is certainly true of black Americans. A clear example of this cultural heterogeneity will be presented in a later discussion of the focus groups conducted at Alabama River Lakes and Carlyle Lake. On the positive side, studies dealing with acculturation have demonstrated that the extent of acculturation (to the mores of the dominant cultural group) has important consequences for outdoor recreation behavior for non-English-speaking groups. However, Gramann (1996) has noted that it is not at all clear that assimilation studies can be easily applied or even relevant to the African-American population in the United States.

One hypothesis for explaining minority recreational behavior that may be of particular interest to the Corps of Engineers is that of selective acculturation. This is an alternative to the strict Anglo-conformity assimilation model, which holds that ethnic minorities will change through time, giving up their distinctive cultural characteristics and adopting those of the dominant group (e.g., middle-class white Americans). Gramann has persuasively argued that the Anglo-conformity model does not fit leisure/recreational behavior because these are areas in which core cultural values of the ethnic group are maintained and expressed. Consequently, the recreational behavior of ethnic minority groups may be highly resistant to change.

The selective acculturation model predicts that while some aspects of socioeconomic behavior may change rapidly within a minority group, expressive leisure behavior, which is closely linked to the core values of the group, may persist indefinitely. The implication of this model is that the recreational activities of some ethnic minority groups may require changes in management style on the part of the Corps of Engineers as a resource managing agency. Whether selective acculturation plays any role in explaining African-American recreational behavior will be explored later, following a discussion of the focus group meetings.

Another aspect of acculturation research is related to the effects of perceived discrimination. Gramann (1996) notes that most minority recreation studies have dealt with perceived discrimination as an independent variable negatively affecting minority recreation participation. It can also be studied as a dependent variable that can be influenced by socioeconomic factors. One such factor is the level of acculturation or assimilation of the minority group. One perspective has been that greater cultural assimilation (to the dominant cultural group) will lead to reduced levels of perceived discrimination by minority group members (Gordon 1964). This has been called the ethnic enclosure hypothesis. Another perspective is that increased knowledge of the dominant culture will lead to greater perceptions of discrimination and even to feelings of group solidarity as members of the group become fully aware of their disadvantaged position vis-a-vis the dominant culture (Glazer and Moynihan 1963, Portes 1984). This has been termed the ethnic competition hypothesis. Research among Hispanic-Americans has tended to support the ethnic enclosure hypothesis (Floyd and Gramann 1993). Gramann (1996) does not address whether perceived discrimination among



black Americans has ever been studied as a dependent variable. Clearly, as noted above, perceived discrimination, as an independent variable, has negatively impacted African-American recreation participation.

### **Marginality Versus Ethnicity**

For 30 years, recreation researchers have struggled to explain why different ethnic minority groups recreate the way they do. Focusing specifically on African-Americans, the key question has been why black Americans have lower participation rates in outdoor recreation than white Americans. Early on, researchers attributed lower participation to the lower socioeconomic position of most black Americans in a white-dominated society (Gramann 1996). More sophisticated studies attempted to control socioeconomic variables. When this was done, participation differences persisted, suggesting that ethnic or cultural preferences may also be important in explaining recreation behavior among black Americans. These disparate findings led to the development of two competing hypotheses. The "marginality hypothesis" holds that the underparticipation of blacks in outdoor recreation results primarily from limited economic resources. This disadvantaged economic position is a function of historical patterns of discrimination. Gramann (1996) expresses it this way:

In other words, the marginal position of African-Americans with respect to society's major institutions (e.g. the economy, education, and government) negatively affects their education levels and disposable income, which in turn is reflected in reduced participation in some types of outdoor recreation activities.

The "ethnicity hypothesis" holds that minority underparticipation results from culturally based differences between ethnic groups in value systems, norms, and leisure socialization patterns (Washburne 1978). Cultural forces, rather than socioeconomic factors, are more significant in explaining differences between blacks and whites in recreation behavior.

Empirical testing of these competing hypotheses has been very limited and somewhat inconclusive. Some studies have found support for the preeminence of cultural preferences over socioeconomic constraints in determining some types of leisure behavior.<sup>1</sup> These studies have included studies of Native Americans and their use of national parks<sup>2</sup> as well as black versus white participation in developed camping, primitive camping, boating, and sightseeing (Washburne and Wall 1980). Both of these studies supported the ethnicity hypothesis. In contrast, Floyd and others (1994) found no differences between middle-class blacks and whites in their preferences for such outdoor activities as hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, boating, and skiing. The only significant differences in recreation activities between the two groups was that blacks ranked sports activities higher. The findings of Floyd and others

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<sup>1</sup> M. F. Floyd. (1991). "Ethnic patterns in outdoor recreation participation: Effects of cultural and structural assimilation," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Science, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.

<sup>2</sup> C. Dragon. (1986). "Native American underrepresentation in national parks: Tests of marginality and ethnicity hypotheses," unpublished M.S. thesis, Department of Wildland Management, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID.

(1994) appear to support the marginality hypothesis with a few caveats noted by Gramann (1996). For example, while other studies have used objective measures of socioeconomic status, such as annual household income, to evaluate the marginality versus ethnicity hypothesis, Floyd and others (1994) employed a more subjective self report of social class.

In the previously mentioned study by Dwyer (1994), significant differences were noted among whites and three minority groups (African-, Hispanic- and Asian-Americans) across a variety of outdoor activities, even after controlling for income, age, gender, household size, and location of residence. He found that African-Americans were significantly more likely to take part in many outdoor sports. He also found that blacks and whites did not differ in their participation rates in fishing and hunting, nor did they differ in such low-cost and accessible activities as jogging, walking, and picnicking. These activities are those most often available at Corps projects.

In general, Gramann (1996) reports that ethnic differences in recreation participation between white and black Americans appear to be minimized when members of each group are subject to the same pervasive constraints on outdoor recreation participation, such as low income, advanced age, and travel distance to recreation facilities. McGuire and others (1987) found very few differences in recreation participation patterns between elderly black and elderly white respondents. Dwyer (1994) reported similarities between the recreation behavior of blacks and whites for highly accessible and inexpensive near-home activities that do not require special equipment or skill, such as walking, jogging, and picnicking. Based on this brief synopsis of previous research, it would appear that many of the recreational activities enjoyed by white Americans are also enjoyed by black Americans of similar socioeconomic status.

### **Recent Demographic Trends**

To fully understand the outdoor recreation participation of African-Americans, it is necessary to review some intriguing new demographic data on the regional distribution of America's black population and the rise of the black middle class in the area of greatest black population density, the South. Frey (1998) notes that, compared to Hispanics and Asians, the black population in America is more dispersed, although concentrated regionally in northern urban centers and in the South. However, the latest demographic data show that the greatest gaining metropolitan areas for blacks in the 1990s are not located in urban centers of the North, but in an economically revitalized New South (Frey 1998):

With a booming economy, a large black middle class, and familiar southern mores, middle-class and working-class blacks from all national origins made Atlanta the biggest gaining metro for blacks between 1990 and 1996.

Similar characteristics are bringing more black Americans to Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, Raleigh-Durham, Charlotte, North Carolina, and a number of other cities across the southeastern United States. Frey (1998) also reports large population gains in northern metros such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. However, these gains reflect natural increases in population, not movement (Frey 1998):

The numbers represent natural increase among already large black populations, which in turn resulted from domestic migration in previous decades. The number of new black residents in these northern metros might be even greater, except that these areas are losing blacks to domestic migration to the South.

The central point of Frey's provocative article entitled "The Diversity Myth" is that the majority of America's cities and towns lack true racial and ethnic diversity even while the observed increases in ethnic minority populations would lead us to believe otherwise. While there are more minority citizens, the nation as a whole is becoming more ethnically regionalized. There are relatively few counties and metropolitan areas with a significant presence of two or more minority groups. Frey (1998) identifies just 21 true "melting-pot metros," including the three largest gateway cities for new immigrants: Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco.

The most recent demographic data pertinent to this discussion show that African-Americans are most overrepresented in the South, with some important clusters located in urban areas of the Northeast and Midwest. In a broad swath of states in the Northeast, Midwest, Rocky Mountains, and Northwest, the populations are mostly white and none of the minority groups come close to approximating the national percentages of the population (blacks 12 percent, Hispanics 11 percent, Asians 3.5 percent, and American Indian 0.7 percent).

The data set presented by Frey reveals that there are only a few counties in the United States that now have or will soon have "minority majorities." Many of these are inner counties of older metropolitan areas with a large African-American population, such as Philadelphia, PA, and St. Louis, MO. This trend will probably continue as it reflects traditional white flight to the suburbs and beyond (Frey 1998).

Frey (1998) proposes that, for black Americans, the 1990s represent both a return to the South (from industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest) and substantial population movement within the South. The intra-South movement represents new gains for middle-class blacks in the suburbs of fast-growing metropolitan areas such as Atlanta, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Washington-Baltimore. Black numbers are also swelling in parts of Florida that did not have a large African-American presence (Frey 1998):

Middle-class blacks in particular are in the vanguard of these New South pioneers, but black retirees who have spent most of their lives in northern and western cities are also attracted to many of the smaller rural counties of the South.

Most minority groups in the United States, including black Americans, reside in metropolitan areas. Native Americans constitute an important exception. Frey (1998) reports that greater than 85 percent of black Americans reside in metropolitan areas. In contrast, the share of the U.S. white population residing in nonmetropolitan areas is approaching one fourth, and less than half reside in the nation's largest cities. Frey concludes that the lifestyles, tastes, and voting patterns of urban areas with large number of minorities and fast-growing populations are likely to change dramatically in the near future, but for the rest of America the rate of change will be much slower and "majority minority areas" will be few and far between.



What this means for outdoor recreation management within the Corps of Engineers is that Corps lakes in the South will increasingly be providing services and maintaining facilities for a rapidly growing black middle class. Corps projects in the North and Midwest adjacent to large urban areas will also be providing services and maintaining facilities to meet the recreational needs of an expanding black population, with considerable diversity in socioeconomic status.

## **Site Visits**

During fall 1997, a number of Corps project managers were contacted to determine if their projects were suitable locations for conducting focus group meetings with ethnic minority visitors, to discuss their recreational experiences at Corps operating projects. The managers were also informed that following each focus group meeting, a survey instrument dealing with minority recreation preferences and experiences would be tested at their project.

As a result of these contacts, two Corps projects with high African-American visitation were selected for the African-American component of the work unit: Woodruff Lake of the Alabama River Lakes (near Montgomery, AL), and Carlyle Lake (near East St. Louis, IL). Alabama River Lakes was visited May 1-2, 1998, and Carlyle Lake, on May 15-16, 1998. During each visit, the facilities frequented by black American visitors were inspected and recreational behavior observed. Extensive interviews with the project managers and the rangers at each lake were conducted. Onsite discussions with Corps rangers at each lake were also videotaped to document their observations and experiences with minority visitors. Finally, a focus group discussion dealing with African-American recreation was conducted with a small group of minority visitors at each project office on a Saturday morning or afternoon during the visit. Rangers at each project invited the participants and assisted in conducting the focus group meetings and administering a questionnaire on outdoor recreation behavior and Corps recreation participation.

## **Alabama River Lakes**

### **Background**

R. E. "Bob" Woodruff Lake is the easternmost lake of the Alabama River Lakes project of the Corps' Mobile District. It stretches along 80 miles (130 km) of the Alabama River and has an area of about 20 square miles (52 km<sup>2</sup>). Woodruff Lake was created by the construction of the Robert F. Henry Lock and Dam, which was completed in 1975. The dam backs up the river to a minimum depth of 9 ft (3 m) from the upper end of the William "Bill" Dannelly Reservoir to the Alabama Power Company's Walter Bouldin Dam on the Coosa River. Woodruff Lake provides recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, water-skiing, picnicking, camping, swimming, and hiking. The project features 11 developed parks with a variety of facilities for visitors. Conveniences at the parks include beaches, campgrounds, picnic areas, trails, and boat-launching ramps. Since construction of the first park

in 1975, annual attendance figures have exceeded 2 million (U.S. Army Engineer District, Mobile 1998).

Prior to the Civil War, the Alabama River Basin became an important cotton-producing area. Because of the color of its rich soil, it came to be known as the "Black Belt." During the height of antebellum prosperity there were more than 200 riverboat landings along the river. The nearby river town of Selma became a cultural, educational, and economic center of the antebellum period. During the war, one of the last major battles took place here when Union troops destroyed one of the South's last major arsenals. After the Civil War, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution granted basic rights to the black populace. However, in this part of the South the amendments changed the life of black people very little until the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s.

The Black Belt region of Alabama, particularly the area between Selma and Montgomery where Woodruff Lake is located, served as a focal point for the historical struggle for the civil rights of black Americans. The events that took place here were critical for the enactment of the 1965 Civil Rights Voting Act (USAED, Mobile 1998). The resource management office and visitor center for the Alabama River Lakes is located about halfway between Selma and Montgomery along a stretch of Highway 80 that has been proposed as a National Historic Trail for its association with the civil rights struggle of African-Americans in the 1960s. The water resource project is located in an area with a large resident black population and near two cities, (Selma and Montgomery) with large black populations.

The interview with the project manager, Mr. Edward "Ike" Lyon, was conducted at the Alabama River Lakes project office. Two Corps rangers, Mr. John Williams and Mr. Myer Hawkes, organized the focus group and the necessary link to the community. These two black rangers also provided valuable background information on the recreational behavior of their visitors. This first interview confirmed that the project received heavy day use by the resident black populations of Montgomery, Selma, and the numerous small towns and farms of the area. Fishing, boating, picnicking, sports (especially basketball), and swimming were cited as the major uses of the lake and its surrounding parks. Overnight camping by black visitors was described as infrequent.

Use of the numerous large group picnic shelters at several parks for family reunions was described as very popular and increasing. The excellent condition of the facilities at the project serves as a magnet for large black family reunions, in which family members living in northern urban areas will also participate. The tone of the meeting was upbeat, and the rangers were enthusiastic in the support of the proposed research. It was clear that they were proud of their facilities and of the black Americans who used them on a regular basis.

Following that meeting, a tour was conducted of the public-use areas most used by black visitors. The following is a brief synopsis of the discussions that the author videotaped.

**Facilities.** There is a great deal of relatively new construction at this project clearly designed for the heavy day use it receives from its mixed black and white customer base. This construction includes a new visitor center, several large group picnic shelters, excellent facilities for swimming (beach and changing facilities), and combination basketball/tennis courts in several day-use areas. There is a conspicuous absence of graffiti on the buildings at all the public-use areas, and the clean and well-maintained appearance of the restrooms in

all the public-use areas was emphasized by the rangers. Camping areas are predominantly used by white visitors, many of whom have recreational vehicles for overnight camping. Some tent camping occurs, but it is minimal. The nature trails and overlooks are well maintained and receive heavy use by both black and white visitors. Many black men in the area own boats and use them extensively for fishing. Bank fishing is also very popular. The use of personal watercraft is not common, and is most often done by visiting white campers.

**Management style.** From the ranger's perspective there is a strong sense of black pride at this project. The area's resident black population sees it as their own and takes pride in its appearance and condition. Relations between white and black day-users is for the most part harmonious. The use of black rangers does a great deal to defuse the occasional problem with black youths who visit the project by themselves or as part of a larger family group. The availability of basketball courts at several public-use areas is seen as an excellent way to channel the energy of black youths visiting the project. The total ban of alcohol in the day-use areas, which is now in force at this project, was described as particularly helpful in keeping good order during those weekends when visitation is heaviest. There is an attempt to isolate camping areas from day-use areas to cut down on the noise levels and to preserve the recreational quality experience of the camping public.

**Observations.** Woodruff Lake provides excellent recreational opportunities for families, both black and white. There appeared to be an easy, genuinely harmonious relationship between black and white visitors in the day-use areas. While there were few black campers to observe, the rangers reported that racial incidents between white campers and black day-users were rare. The project is well managed and well maintained. A serious gang problem was not apparent, although the rangers informed the author that such a problem did exist in one public-use area near Montgomery that has now been taken over by the city of Montgomery.

### **Description of Alabama River Lakes Focus Group**

The focus group meeting was held on the afternoon of May 2, 1998, at the Alabama River Lakes Project Office near Lowndesboro, Alabama. The participants consisted of five men and four women from the Selma, Montgomery, and Lowndesboro areas. The participants ranged in age from their late 20s to over 60. The socioeconomic status of the group was clearly middle class. Education levels ranged from high school graduate to advanced university graduate. The participants included a law enforcement officer, a research chemist, a minister, businessmen and women, farmers, and housewives. Three members of the county sheriff's office observed the proceedings until they had to respond to a call. Rangers Williams and Hawkes participated in the group discussions but did not provide written responses as did the other participants. The tone of the meeting was enthusiastic and extremely cooperative.

The meeting followed the format of introductions, discussion of research, administration of the survey instrument, and an open discussion of the group's responses. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, each containing 15 questions. The first section dealt with outdoor recreation style in general. These questions solicited information on the participants' favorite forms of recreation, the average size of group they recreate with, preferences for recreating with family members, preferences for types of camping facilities, forms of outdoor

recreation they might wish to try in the future, experience recreating with members of other ethnic/racial groups, and language skills and ability to understand signs and verbal instructions at Corps projects.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on participants' recreation participation at Corps projects. Questions sought to elicit information on the frequency of visits, hindrances to visiting the Corps facility such as transportation problems, preferences for water-based recreation at Corps lakes, facilities they may wish to have that are not currently available, whether they felt safe while visiting the project, preferences for interpretive displays about natural and cultural resources, their level of comfort with other ethnic/racial groups recreating at the project, experiences with discriminatory behavior at Corps projects, and general questions dealing with the Corps' overall efforts to provide a quality recreation experience to its minority visitors and how the Corps could improve its facilities and services to increase their family's enjoyment in the future.

### **Outdoor Recreation Style**

Regarding favorite forms of recreation in general, the group's responses included fishing, hunting, walking/jogging, basketball, volleyball, baseball, bicycling, and picnicking. No recreational activities were identified that might be described as distinctively ethnic (e.g., Tai chi and Asian-Americans, cricket and the British, etc.). One surprise was the apparent popularity of horseback trail riding in this part of rural Alabama. Several individuals described their participation in this activity and indicated they would welcome the creation of trails for this activity around Corps lakes in Alabama.

All respondents preferred to recreate with family members, although the men occasionally recreated alone or with nonfamily members for some activities such as fishing and hunting. The average size recreational group varied widely from 2 to 20 when families recreated together. All respondents indicated their participation in family reunions held at the Corps lake when group size would increase to between 100 and 150.

Regarding preferences for camping there was a clear division by gender. All the women preferred developed camping areas with electrical hookups. Men preferred a mix of both primitive and developed camp sites indicating that developed sites worked better when camping with family members. All respondents indicated that the Corps should preserve wild/undeveloped areas as wildlife habitat whenever possible. In group discussion, none of the participants indicated they owned large recreational vehicles or regularly engaged in camping at other Corps lakes.

When asked what new forms of recreation they might wish to try in the future, the group responded with the following: riding a jet ski, horseback trail riding, camping, swimming, and boating. The group's discussion clearly indicated that black Americans in this part of the South were just beginning to take up the water-based recreational sports that many white Americans enjoy. The cost of boats and personal watercraft is now becoming manageable, as disposable income increases among members of the growing black middle class.

Regarding the questions dealing with their interaction other racial/ethnic groups, all but one of the respondents indicated they had non-black friends and business associates, and that they enjoyed recreating with people from other ethnic or racial groups. The group's

discussion indicated their awareness of racist attitudes on the part of some whites, but there was consensus that things had changed in the South since the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960s and that there were many more white people who were willing to offer a hand of friendship to the black Americans with whom they worked or lived.

The questions regarding language abilities were seen by the group as not pertinent to African-Americans and should not be included in any survey instrument to be administered to African-Americans at Corps projects. Only one respondent indicated language competency in a language other than English.

### **Recreation Participation at Corps Projects**

When asked "How often do you visit Corps lakes?" the group's responses varied from 2 to 3 times a year to every weekend. In general, men visited the project more because of their interest in fishing. Women tended to come more often in family groups, although one female respondent visited the scenic overlooks and trails quite often as a regular means of getting exercise and unwinding from the tension of the workday. None of the respondents had any difficulty reaching the project. The average travel time was about 35 minutes since the lake is situated about equidistant from Selma and Montgomery.

When asked about water-based recreation at Corps lakes, the group's responses included swimming, boating, and fishing. Several women indicated they had no experience with water-based recreational activities with the exception of wading or walking in the water near the swimming beach. No respondent indicated the use of personal watercraft or water-skiing. Group discussion revealed that many black Americans never learned to swim, and consequently there was some fear of the water on the part of many older adults. This situation began to change in the 1970s, and the ability to swim has become more common among children and young adults. Several participants expressed a desire for swimming lessons to be given by Corps rangers at the swimming beaches at Woodruff Lake.

Regarding new recreational activities and facilities they would like to have at their favorite Corps lake in the future, the group responded with the following: softball complex, open air theater, boat rides on the lake, dance hall, archery range, facilities for arts and crafts shows, and a place for kids to put on plays/programs that could also be used for craft shows and seminars. Group discussion revealed a strong sense of community among the area's black residents. The group members indicated that they would very much enjoy facilities that would help to strengthen this sense of community spirit.

All respondents but one reported that they visited interpretive displays and enjoyed them. The historical displays at the Holy Ground Battlefield public-use area was a particular favorite of the focus group members. The overlooks and trails that were signed with information regarding the natural resources of the area were also favorites. Group discussion revealed that such displays were not the primary reason for coming to the lake, but they definitely added to the quality of the recreational experience.

All the participants reported that they felt safe while visiting the project and that gang activity was not a serious problem, perhaps because of the distance from Montgomery. Group discussion revealed that the banning of alcohol from the day-use areas had reduced the number of fights between young men recreating in the day-use areas. With two



exceptions, the respondents always felt comfortable with whites who were recreating in the day-use areas at the same time they were. The two who responded negatively said that they sometimes felt uncomfortable with whites who were picnicking in an adjacent area.

When asked if they had felt discriminated against at a Corps lake because of their racial/ethnic background, 6 said no and 3, yes. When asked for details during group discussion, one respondent described an incident with a certain white ranger who was known to be more strict with black groups about keeping noise levels down. During the many black family reunions at Woodruff Lake, young family members like to play loud music. Such loud music will draw the attention of rangers on routine patrol. The brusque manner of this white ranger when he confronted the group angered many of the participant's family members. In general, however, the Alabama focus group reported a lack of overt discriminatory behavior by Corps personnel, contractors, and white visitors. The overall lack of racial incidents and racial tension at this project, located in the very area where the black Civil Rights movement began 30 years ago, is a remarkable indicator that racial harmony in America is more than just Martin Luther King's dream, that it is being actualized.

When asked if the Corps is doing all it can to provide a quality recreation experience and what kinds of improvements are needed, the Alabama focus group provided these responses:

- More community-type activities.
- Safety courses (swimming and boating), especially those geared for children.
- Construction of cabins that could be rented in the camping areas.
- Carnival/festival-type activities on an annual basis at the Corps lake.
- More large group pavilions/shelters that could be reserved for family reunions and social occasions.
- Swim camp for children during the summer with Corps rangers.
- More handicap-accessible facilities.
- More TV and radio advertisement about the facilities available at the Corps lake.
- Construction of a vehicular bridge across the dam at Woodruff Lake.
- More developed camping areas with electrical hookups.
- More shelters that can be used on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- More safe swimming areas.



Figure 1. Woodruff Lake, Alabama, focus group

At the conclusion of the discussion, a group photograph (Figure 1) was taken and each participant was individually thanked.

## Carlyle Lake, Illinois

### Background

St. Louis District's Carlyle Lake is located on the Kaskaskia River in rural Illinois farm country about 50 miles (80 km) east of the St. Louis metropolitan area. The settlement of Carlyle began in 1812 when a log fort and blockhouse were constructed at a river ford as a means of protection against the local Indians. Frequent flooding by the Kaskaskia River threatened to destroy the town several times during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1952 the Kaskaskia Valley Association formed to pursue a comprehensive plan for improved flood control, navigation, water supply, fish and wildlife conservation, and recreation in the Kaskaskia River basin. Congress responded to this need and, in 1958, authorized the Corps to develop Carlyle Lake. Construction began that same year. A total of 37,470 acres (152 million m<sup>2</sup>) of land were purchased, and an additional 25,339 acres (102 million m<sup>2</sup>) of flowage easement lands were acquired. The project was completed in 1967 at a cost of \$41 million (USAED, St. Louis 1998).

Over 600 campsites are available at Carlyle Lake's seven public campgrounds. Many campgrounds include electrical hookups, drinking water, restrooms, hot showers, and laundry facilities. A number of day-use areas receive heavy visitation by the citizens of the St. Louis metro area during the summer months. Sailing is one of the unique attractions of Carlyle Lake. The combination of wide open water, low hills, and strong winds has made it one of the most popular lakes for sailing in the Midwest, and it annually hosts regional, national, and international sailing regattas. Four marinas, seventeen public boat ramps, and one sailboat harbor provide a variety of services for boating enthusiasts (USAED, St. Louis 1998).

On May 15, 1998, the project manager, Mr. Robert Wilkins, was interviewed. The interview revealed a very different situation than the one encountered in Alabama. Carlyle Lake is located in a county with less than 5 percent of the total population African-American. There is a very small black population in the town of Carlyle and in a few of the small towns around the lake. Black visitors to the lake come primarily from East St. Louis, IL, and St. Louis, MO. They come in relatively large numbers on weekends during the summer months and use the swim beaches near the visitor center and at three other public-use areas. Many black visitors like to bank fish in the Spillway Recreation Area and at other locations around the lake. Few black visitors participate in the sailing activity which is so conspicuous around the lake. Even fewer have the luxury pleasure boats that dominate the four large marinas at Carlyle Lake. A few of the local black visitors have fishing boats.

Following this interview, two Corps rangers, Mr. Jody Harris and Ms. Jackie Taylor, conducted a tour of the lake facilities and provided valuable background information prior to the focus group meeting with African-American visitors on May 16. Rangers Harris and Taylor spoke on camera about their observations and experiences with black visitors at the public-use areas that receive the highest black visitation. The following section is a synopsis of the videotaped discussions at these areas:

## **Dam West Recreation Area**

This recreation area receives the highest minority visitation of any public-use area in the St. Louis District. The primary activities are picnics and use of the adjacent swim beach by African- and Asian-Americans from the St. Louis metro area. Black visitors participate in large group picnics every weekend from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Some of these groups may number around 75 people. Many of the black visitors to this area come from the poorest areas of East St. Louis.

There is an increasing amount of gang activity at Carlyle Lake by black and Asian groups, and much occurs around the Dam West recreation area. Alcohol has been prohibited in the adjacent swimming beach area. However, it is permitted in the day-use areas here and around the lake, and this may be contributing to the problem of gang violence. Regular ranger foot patrols are used in the area to keep problems from developing between rival gang members. The rangers indicated that most of the gang confrontations appear to be black against black or black against Asian. There are relatively few problems involving black and white visitors.

A continuing concern of the rangers is that there does not appear to be enough supervision of black children when their families visit the recreation area. Lost or hurt children are a constant problem for the rangers. Another problem is that of drownings. There are several drownings each year of black youths visiting the lake. These incidents usually do not involve personal watercraft. Many black children and adolescents from the city simply do not know how to swim. Over the past several years the Corps has conducted water safety programs on two swimming beaches frequented by blacks, and numerous black children have attended. However, there is a concern that not enough black visitors receive swimming lessons and basic instruction in water safety.

## **Spillway Recreation Area**

Numerous African- and Asian-American visitors bank fish along the spillway on weekends during the summer season. Many of these visitors like to catch rough fish such as carp, buffalo, and catfish. In addition, there are families picnicking, playing Frisbee, pitching horseshoes, and lounging on the grass. The reason for this heavy usage is that it is relatively inexpensive for a group from the metro area to share the cost of gas to come out to Carlyle, which is about a 50-min drive from East St. Louis.

## **Dam West Campground**

Many of the campers coming from Carlyle live within a 50-mile radius of the lake. There are very few minorities using this campground and others around the lake. The impression of the rangers is that the great majority of minority visitors do not have the money to spend on recreational vehicles, boats, and personal watercraft. The fact is that the greatest number of minority visitors come from East St. Louis and from low-income areas. One ranger pointed out that there are few minority tent campers. Discussion on this point revealed that few black children from low-income families have any experience with camping and that a "culture of poverty" limits their interaction with the natural world. Tent camping is simply not something within their cultural repertoire.

### **Brinks Road Fishing Access Point**

One of the favorite fishing sites used by minority visitors requires no day-use fees. It is the area where Brinks Road crosses an arm of the lake on the eastern shore. During the summer months it receives heavy visitation by black and Asian families who come to fish. Rangers routinely patrol this area. Alcohol is not prohibited, and there are occasional black versus black or black versus Asian confrontations which the rangers feel may be alcohol related. The appeal of the area to minority visitors is that it is free access to the lake and not so close to the Corps administrative office as the Dam West recreation area.

### **Coles Creek Recreation Area**

The campground at this recreation area receives very few minority campers. It does have a swimming beach that is used by blacks who live in Carlyle, Centralia, and the surrounding area. While Dam West gets mostly black visitors from the St. Louis metro area, Cole Creek area is used predominantly by the local population. No special facilities have been constructed for the black visitors. When the author described how basketball courts are found in many day-use areas at Woodruff Lake in Alabama, the rangers seemed somewhat surprised. They indicated that the most the District would allow here would be for the Corps to provide the land if a local community wished to construct a basketball court in this or other day-use areas around the lake.

### **Boulder Marina**

The Boulder Marina is one of four large marinas at Carlyle Lake. It is adjacent to the town of Boulder and the Boulder Recreation Area maintained by the Corps. Many large and expensive sailboats are moored here. About 80 percent of the boat owners come from St. Louis metro area. They were described by the rangers and the marina operator as mostly white upper class people—many doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. There are almost no minority owners of these sailboats. The rangers were aware of just one minority-owned vessel.

When the marina operator was questioned, he revealed that black fishermen sometimes buy gas for their outboard motors, but many of them live in the area and do not come from the St. Louis and East St. Louis area. He reported problems with urban blacks fishing from the banks in and near the marina, causing problems with access for boat owners who were attempting to launch or land their boats. He reported relatively few alcohol-related problems among these black visitors. The most serious problems he encountered were with local whites who had too much to drink on weekends during the summer.

### **Description of Carlyle Lake Focus Group**

The next day, a focus group meeting was held at the Carlyle Lake Visitor Center. In organizing the meeting, the ranger staff had contacted local black officials in the area, including the Carlyle police chief, requested assistance from several black students who worked at the project office, talked to black visitors in the Dam West Recreation Area and the Spillway Recreation Area, and put up flyers around the lake announcing the meeting. Ranger Taylor estimated that more than 25 individuals had been personally invited to attend the meeting.



**Figure 2. Carlyle Lake, Illinois, focus group**

In spite of these efforts, only three black men from the Carlyle area attended (Figure 2). All three men were very familiar with the Corps and with the behavior of black visitors to the project, both local black citizens and visitors from the St. Louis metro area.

All of the participants could be described as middle class. Ages ranged from early 30s to mid-60s.

Two of the three were college graduates, and one was a retired Corps ranger. As with the Alabama focus group, discussion centered on a draft survey instrument, which contained two sections—the first dealing with outdoor recreation style and the second with recreation participation at Corps projects. Following introductions and the author's description of the research project, the survey instrument was administered, and written responses to the 30 questions were provided by the participants. During the second half of the meeting there was a facilitated group discussion of the responses.

The tone of the meeting was friendly and very frank. The participants were intent on providing an accurate picture of how black people like to recreate. An example of the very frank discussion is the fact that, early on, one of the participants requested that the term "African-American" be dropped as not being accurate even if it was politically correct. He stated, "I am not from Africa, have never been to Africa. I am an American, pure and simple. If you must refer to my race, call me a black American."

### **Outdoor Recreation Style**

Group discussion revealed that this was a unique group of black Americans. All three men had grown up in the Carlyle area which was, and is, predominantly white. In school they were either the only black kid in the class or one of a handful. They had all had white friends throughout their lives and worked closely with whites as adults. For the most part these men never learned to think of themselves as anything other than Americans. One of the men in the group was so light complexioned that most people meeting him for the first time would not recognize him as a black man. The men in this rather unique group recognized themselves as a highly assimilated group of black men and consequently took pains to point out that their responses to the survey questions would not be typical of the black visitors from the St. Louis metro area.

The group's responses to the questions on outdoor recreation style are generally typical of what one would expect from a group of white Americans living in the rural Midwest. Favorite forms of recreation for all the participants included fishing, boating, hunting, and sports. Average recreational group size was 2 to 6, except for family reunions which might reach 75 members.



Their camping preferences were mixed in that they saw a need for primitive and developed campgrounds, depending on the family situation and what their family wanted in a recreational experience. All three had some experience in wilderness settings and had enjoyed them while hunting. All the men enjoyed taking their families to the lake but occasionally liked to fish or hunt alone or with a friend, who many times might be white. All three seemed content with the recreational opportunities available to Carlyle Lake. One of the men owned a sailboat and used it on a regular basis.

All the men felt that questions regarding language abilities should not be used in a survey administered to black Americans. One man indicated that his children were fluent in German. When questioned, he revealed that his wife was German and that he met her during military service in Europe.

When discussing the black visitors from East St. Louis, one participant expressed regret that the children he saw on the swimming beach at Dam West had not grown up as he had. The group consensus was that it is a mistake to view the outdoor recreation style of black Americans as an ethnic or cultural phenomenon. The recreational habits of these urban black visitors is related more to economics and history, particularly history in which past racial discrimination has played a huge role.

### **Recreation Participation at Corps Projects**

All three Carlyle men were frequent visitors to Carlyle Lake and occasionally visited other Corps lakes in the region. Apart from their strong interest in fishing and boating, they most often came to the lake for family picnics which many times included swimming. One participant described himself as an avid duck hunter who often hunted in the State Wildlife Management Area located at the far north end of the lake.

When asked what activities or facilities they would like to have at their favorite Corps lake that they do not have now, the group provided the following list: basketball courts in day-use areas, an archery range/field course, place for group gatherings such as large pavilions, and more concession stands near the water.

None of the participants felt unsafe when visiting the lake but in group discussion expressed concern over rival gang fights that were becoming more frequent. Their solution to this problem was effective law enforcement through a combination of ranger and sheriff patrols.

Regarding those questions dealing with past incidents of discrimination, only one participant indicated that he had felt discriminated against because of his race while at a Corps lake. However, he declined to give any details during group discussion. The same individual also felt that the Corps had room for improvement in providing a quality recreation experience for minorities. The other group members did not share this opinion. In general, all three participants felt that the Corps was doing a good job and that the recommendations they were making were more like fine-tuning something that was already working well.

In summary, the Carlyle Lake focus group and the overall situation observed there seems to offer compelling support for the marginality hypothesis described earlier. Where middle-class black Americans are given the same economic resources and equal access to recreational

facilities and services, there seems to be no significant difference from white Americans in recreation style and participation. In the case where the recreational behavior of a low-income urban black population differs substantially from that of middle-class white America, the difference seems not to be related to different ethnic or cultural values but rather to economics, strongly affected by a history of past discrimination, resulting in a "culture" of poverty, impacting recreation.

## **Management Implications for the Corps of Engineers**

Executive Order 12862, issued on September 11, 1993, requires each Federal agency to (a) identify the customers who are, or should be, served by that agency and (b) survey its customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services. The purpose of developing information on customer satisfaction is to set standards that will allow Federal agencies to "provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector."

Executive Order 12898, issued on February 11, 1994, directs Federal agencies to "identify differential patterns of consumption of natural resources among minority populations and low-income populations" and ensure that programs, policies, or activities that substantially affect human health of the environment (presumably including outdoor recreation operations) do not exclude persons from receiving the benefits of such programs as a result of race, color, or national origin. Furthermore, each Federal agency is ordered to, whenever practicable, collect, maintain, and analyze information on the race and national origin of residents of areas surrounding Federal facilities or sites that have substantial environmental, human health, or economic effects on nearby populations (Gramann 1996).

With the creation and continued funding of the RRP work unit on Ethnic Culture and Corps Recreation Participation, the Corps of Engineers has set in motion an effort to comply with the requirements of these Executive Orders. Full compliance will involve some changes in the way the Corps currently interacts with its ethnic minority customers. Recommended changes to make Corps operational projects more user-friendly to African-Americans can be grouped into three general areas: facilities, management, and policy.

The following preliminary recommendations include those proposed by the African-American participants of the two focus groups and the project personnel at two Corps lakes who interact with black American visitors on a daily basis.

### **Facilities**

Project managers are strongly encouraged to upgrade their facilities to match the needs of their minority customers. User survey instruments, such as the one under development at WES, as well as public meetings and focus groups, such as the ones conducted at Woodruff and Carlyle Lakes, are recommended methods to determine with considerable precision the kinds of improvements desired by minority customers.

Facility improvements recommended by black focus group participants include the following:

- Sports facilities such as basketball courts, ballfields for baseball and softball, and tennis courts.
- More large group shelters for larger family reunions and other social occasions.
- More swimming beaches with changing/shower facilities.
- Creation of more nature trails and horseback trails (in rural areas).
- Interpretive displays dealing with natural and cultural resources found in the area.
- Developed campgrounds (electrical hookups and water) as well as opportunities for primitive camping.

### **Services**

Improvements in Corps services seen as highly desirable by black Americans include these:

- More water safety instruction for black youth, swimming lessons conducted at Corps swimbeaches, safe boating operation courses, etc.
- Overall greater involvement with black communities through the holding of craft shows, carnivals, pageants, and other community events at the Corps lakes.
- Increased ranger patrols and law enforcement efforts in areas with gang activity.

### **Policy**

Based on the results of this preliminary research, consideration of the following recommendations may be appropriate for Corps' policy makers:

- Proactive stance toward cost sharing in the construction of sports facilities at projects with high African-American visitation; revising current policy on cost sharing.
- More aggressive attempts to hire black rangers at projects with high African-American visitation.
- Hiring of rangers (black and white) and gate attendant contractors with good people skills; train rangers in how to deal with minority visitors.
- Greater coordination and involvement with the black communities in the project area; expand this coordination and involvement to visitor source areas, such as East St. Louis at Carlyle Lake, where large numbers of black visitors reside.
- Greater flexibility in allowing black community events to take place at the project.
- Prohibition of alcohol in day-use areas at projects that experience gang activity or are known to be problem areas.

## Future Research

Based on this preliminary study, it is essential to gather more data on recreation style and participation from low-income black visitors. To accomplish this, the draft version of the survey instrument used as a focus of discussion at Woodruff and Carlyle lakes will be revised and further tested through its administration to a large number of black visitors at both projects during the spring and early summer of 1999.

Additional work under this RRP work unit includes technical notes on the Asian-American and Hispanic-American ethnic minority groups, scheduled for completion in fall 1998; a WES technical report summarizing research on the four minority groups, scheduled for completion in fall 1999; and a final version of the Ethnic Minority User Survey instrument.

In the larger arena of academic leisure research, Floyd (1998) provides a thoughtful review of the future of ethnicity research that can serve as a denouement to this discussion of African-American recreation. In an article entitled "Getting beyond marginality and ethnicity: The challenge for race and ethnic studies in leisure research," Floyd argues that, for the past 20 years, the marginality-ethnicity framework has served as the point of reference for the majority of race and ethnic studies and that a better and more sophisticated approach is needed. He argues that scholarship on race, ethnicity, and leisure will advance only if three critical areas are addressed. First, there has been an overreliance on the marginality and ethnicity hypotheses, which has prevented theoretical and conceptual development of the ethnic variation problem. Second, past leisure research has largely neglected the dynamic elements of race and ethnicity. The implications of racial stratification and subordination for leisure choices and constraints have been largely ignored. This seems especially true of the African-American situation. Third, there is a need to investigate a wider range of dependent variables and, perhaps, the possibility that leisure itself is an explanatory variable.

Floyd (1998) wonders what role leisure interaction actually plays in the creation, maintenance, and expression of racial and ethnic identity, and how leisure is organized to meet the needs of different racial and ethnic groups. Perhaps the data that have been presented here provide at least a partial answer. The primary source data from the site visits and focus groups in Alabama and Illinois would seem to indicate that the recreational behavior of middle-class black Americans may be very close, if not identical, to that of most white middle-class Americans. The variations in African-American recreation style and participation observed among working class and low-income black Americans, that group which some sociologists describes as the black underclass, may represent ways in which recreation is functioning to meet a variety of their emotional and physical needs. The Corps' future role, as a Federal agency interested in providing both quality service and environmental justice in the area of recreation, must surely be a supportive one to both groups.

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